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The Art of Léon Bakst

For the Ballets Russes
of Serge Diaghilev

The Harvard Theatre Collection

The Edward Sheldon Exhibition Rooms
The Nathan Marsh Pusey Library
Harvard University

Wednesday, June 30, through Friday, September 24, 1999

Weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.
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The Ballets Russes of Serge Diaghilev

The Diaghilev Ballets Russes, an itinerant ballet company formed by Serge Diaghilev (1872–1929), brought ballet as a serious art form out of Russia to the West. In the twenty years of its existence, from 1909 to 1929, Diaghilev commissioned choreographers, composers, and designers to work as collaborators with each other and with the performers, resulting in ballets that can be considered total works of art. In the years before World War I, Diaghilev could count on personnel from Russia. After the upheavals of World War I and the Russian Revolution, Diaghilev was forced to turn to Europe to fill his creative needs.

The history of the company can be described in various ways. In terms of its choreographers, the periods are fairly clear: Michel Fokine (1880–1942) was the chief choreographer from 1909–1913, returning for a season in 1914; Vaslav Nijinsky (1889–1950) with several startling experiments in 1912 to 1913, and again in 1916; Léonide Massine (1895–1979) from 1915 to 1920, returning from 1925 to 1928 for specific assignments; Bronislava Nijinska (1891–1972) from 1921 to 1924; and George Balanchine (1904–1983) from 1925 to 1929.

Léon Bakst (1866–1924) met Diaghilev in 1890 when both were young arts enthusiasts in St. Petersburg. Bakst became a member of the coterie that published the important journal and formed the arts society named *Mir iskusstva* (*The World of Art*). Bakst's friendship with Diaghilev and other members of the circle brought him into the world of ballet and theater in St. Petersburg, resulting in a number of design assignments during the first decade of the twentieth century, to serve as preamble to his works for the Ballets Russes of Serge Diaghilev. He was the chief designer for Diaghilev's company from 1909 to 1913, returning again to work for Diaghilev in 1914, 1917, and 1921.

Léon Bakst

A Chronology

- 1866 Born Lev Samoilovich Rosenberg, April 27 (old style) in Grodno, a small border town between Poland and Lithuania.
- 1874–1883 Educated at the Sixth Gymnasium in St. Petersburg.
- 1883 Entered the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts where his teachers were Isaac Asknazi, Karl Wenig, and Pavel Chistiakov.
- 1886 His painting, "The Madonna Weeping Over Christ," in which the Biblical characters were depicted as peasant Jews, was turned down for the competition at the Academy. He left the Academy the following year.
- 1888–1891 Illustrated children's books.
- 1889 Began to sign his works, Bakst, after his grandmother's maiden name (Bakster).
- 1890 Began friendship with Albert Benois and his younger brother, Alexander. Met their friends Konstantin Somov, Dmitry Filosofov, Walter Nouvel, Alfred Nurok, and Serge Diaghilev, to form some of the most important relationships of his life. Attended the dress rehearsal of Marius Petipa's and Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. Began to study watercolor.
- 1891 First trip to Europe. In Germany and Belgium, and Paris in July for extended stay, traveled to South of France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland. Showed works in exhibitions sponsored by the Society of Russian Watercolorists.
- 1892 Received commission to paint "The Arrival in Paris of the Russian Admiral Avelan" (painting finished in 1900). Contributed sketches to magazine and newspaper outlets.
- 1893 Trip to Paris. Studied with Jean-Léon Gérôme and at the academies of Rodolphe Julian and Albert Edelfeldt.
- 1894 In St. Petersburg, where he painted portraits.
- 1895 Summer in Paris. Princess Maria Tenisheva, wife of a Russian millionaire, purchased several of his watercolors. The Princess

had a vast collection and was interested in reviving old Russian craftsmanship. She and Savva Mamontov, the railroad magnate and arts patron, would become the chief financial backers of the journal, *World of Art*. Mamontov and his wife created an important arts colony at their Abramtsevo estate.

- 1896 Spent most of year in Paris. Visited Madrid.
- 1897 Further exhibits of his paintings in St. Petersburg. First art exhibit mounted by Diaghilev of German and English watercolorists. Summer in Paris, then to Algeria and Tunisia.
- 1898 Participated in exhibition of Works by Russian and Finnish Artists, arranged by Diaghilev. Started to work in lithography. Organization of the journal and arts society, *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*) by Diaghilev, Benois, Bakst, Alexander Golovine, Constantin Korovine, Isaac Levitan, Andreas Zorn, Filosofov, and Nouvel. Published from November, 1898–1904. Bakst was the chief designer of the journal.
- 1899 Participated in International Art show organized by the World of Art. Invited by Diaghilev to contribute to the Imperial Theaters yearbook. Continued painting portraits and landscapes, posters, and book covers.
- 1900 Continued art works. First design for a program at the Hermitage Theater.
- 1901 First theatrical assignment for costumes for the ballet *Sylvia*, with a score by Léo Delibes, planned for the Maryinsky theater but never produced. Continued painting and design work for journals, books, *World of Art*. Met his future wife, Lubov Gritsenko.
- 1902 Designed set and costumes for Frederic Febvre's *Le Coeur de la Marquise*, with choreography by Marius Petipa and music by Guirard, at St. Petersburg's Hermitage Theater, and for Euripides' tragedy *Hippolytus* produced by Yuri Ozarovskiy at the Alexandrinsky Theater, St. Petersburg. Continued design output.
- 1903 Showed works in various exhibitions. Designed scenery and costumes for Josef Bayer's *Die Puppenfee* (*The Fairy Doll*), with choreography by Serge and Nicholas Legat and a libretto by Josef Hassreiter and Franz Gaul, at the Hermitage Theater. *World of Art* votes to affiliate with Moscow Union of Russian Artists. Did drawings for production of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus at*

- Colonus*. Traveled to Rome and Finland. Married Lubov Gritsenko.
- 1904 Designed scenery and costumes for *Oedipus At Colonus*, produced by Ozarovsky at Alexandrinsky Theater, St. Petersburg. Illustrations for Gogol's novel, *The Nose*. Began portrait of Diaghilev. Visited Finland, Italy, and France. Designed costumes for Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* produced by Ozarovsky, with debut by Ida Rubinstein.
- 1905 Designed Diaghilev's Russian Portrait Exhibition in St. Petersburg. Continued design and painting work.
- 1906 Completed portrait, "Diaghilev and his Nurse." Did interior decoration for Diaghilev's World of Art exhibition in St. Petersburg. Executed many portraits, book and journal covers. Designed exhibition, "Two Centuries of Russian Art," mounted by Diaghilev in Paris. Designed curtain for Vera Komissarzhevskaya's New Drama theater. Invited to teach at Elizaveta Zvantseva's art studio in St. Petersburg. First collaboration with choreographer, Michel Fokine. Designed costumes for works featuring Mathilda Ksessinska, Anna Pavlova, and Anatole Obukhov. Did frontispiece for Alexander Blok's *Snow Mask*. Traveled in Greece with Valentin Serov. Bakst's son, Andrei, born. Designed costume for Pavlova in Fokine's *Dying Swan*, to become her signature role, and another for Tamara Karsavina.
- 1908 Continued portraits of theatrical figures including Isadora Duncan and Anna Pavlova. Completed painting on ancient Greece, "Terror Antiquus," exhibited in Paris and in St. Petersburg. Designed sets and costumes for Ida Rubinstein's first *Salomé*. Participated in designs for first ballets to be produced by Diaghilev in Paris.
- 1909 First season in Paris of Diaghilev Ballets Russes. Designed costumes for Karsavina and Nijinsky in *Le Festin*, sets and costumes for *Cléopâtre*. Visited Venice.
- 1910 Designed Pavlova's costumes for *Bacchanale*, several costumes for *Les Orientales*, costumes for *Le Carnaval*, sets and costumes for *Schéhérazade*, several costumes for *The Firebird* for the second season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Won gold medal for "Terror Antiquus" at International Art Exhibition in Brussels. Quit teaching position in Russia. Divorced his wife and became a permanent resident of Paris. Visited Germany.

- 1911 Designed new sets for production of *Le Carnaval* at the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. For the third season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, designed *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Narcisse*, and the unproduced *La Péri*. Designed *Le Martyre de St. Sébastien* for Ida Rubinstein. An exhibit of Bakst's stage designs was mounted in Paris. Designed sets for a production of the opera *Ivan the Terrible* in Paris, and for the opera *Mephistopheles* in London. Designed a costume for Marchesa Casati.
- 1912 For the fourth Ballets Russes season, designed sets and costumes for *Le Dieu Bleu*, *Thamar*, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* and *Daphnis and Chloë*. For Ida Rubinstein's company, designed sets for *Helen of Sparta*, and *Salomé*. Designed costumes for *Les Papillons*, at Maryinsky Theater. One-man show of his works in London. Returned to St. Petersburg for a fortnight.
- 1913 For the fifth season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, designed sets and costumes for *Jeux*, for the fourth scene in opera *Boris Godunov*. For Ida Rubinstein's company, designed sets and costumes for *La Pisanella*, staged by Vsevolod Meyerhold. For Anna Pavlova's company, designed sets and costumes for *Les Orientales*, presented in New York. Designed opera *Il Segreto di Susanna*, produced in London, and a production of a mime-drama, *Orpheus*, for the Maryinsky Theater. First one-man show in New York. Publication, *The Decorative Art of Leon Bakst*.
- 1914 Elected a full member of St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. For Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, designed costumes for *La Légende de Joseph*.
- 1915 Spent most of the year in Switzerland for his health. Designed some new costumes for ballets in the Diaghilev repertory.
- 1916 Spent May in Florence. Designed Anna Pavlova's production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, presented in New York.
- 1917 For Diaghilev Ballets Russes, designed sets and costumes for *Les Femmes de bonne Humeur*, designed costumes for an un-presented production of Rimsky-Korsakov opera *Sadko*, and sets and costumes for Gabriele d'Annunzio's tragedy *Phèdre*.
- 1918 Designed costumes for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes production of *La Boutique Fantasque*, but broke with Diaghilev when he invited André Derain to do the sets.
- 1919 Designed costumes for *Aladin; ou, la Lampe Merveilleuse*.

- 1921 Designed sets and costumes for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes production of *The Sleeping Princess*.
- 1922 Continued to write and publish essays. Sat for a portrait by Pablo Picasso. Designed costumes for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes production of *Mavra*, but it was not realized because Diaghilev turned to Leopold Survage for the sets. Final break with Diaghilev. For Ida Rubinstein's company, wrote the libretto and sketched the costumes for the ballet *Artemis Troublée*; also did new designs for *Le Martyre de St. Sebastien*. Designed costumes for *Judith*, produced by Andre Antoine. Designed and wrote libretto for *La Lachète* and *Old Moscow*, at Forum Theater, Paris. André Levinson published two monographs devoted to Bakst's life and work.
- 1923 Was invited by John Garrett to decorate his Evergreen Theater in Baltimore, where the only extant Bakst theater and sets still exist. Had one-man shows in Chicago and New York, and gave lectures on costume and textile design. Designed for Rubinstein's company a new production of *Phèdre*. Wrote book and did designs for the ballet, *The Magic Night*, at Paris Opera.
- 1924 Visited Washington and New York. Wrote book and designed the ballet *Istar* for Rubinstein's company. Died on December 27 in Paris.

This chronology was compiled by Iris M. Fanger, based on *Leon Bakst: Set and Costume Designs, Book Illustrations, Painting, and Graphic Works*, by Irina Pruzhan, translated by Arthur Shkarovski-Raffe, London, 1987.

Cléopâtre

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Anton Arensky, with additions by Sergei Taneyev, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Mikhail Glinka, Alexander Glazunov, Modest Mussorgsky, Nicholas Tcherepnine.

Libretto: after Alexander Pushkin.

Design: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: As *Egyptian Nights*, Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, March 21, 1908. As *Cléopâtre*, Diaghilev Ballets Russes, June 2, 1909, Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris.

Principal dancers: *Egyptian Nights*, Anna Pavlova, Elizaveta Time, Pavel Gerdt, Olga Preobrazhenskaya, Vaslav Nijinsky, Michel Fokine, Tamara Karsavina. *Cléopâtre*, Ida Rubinstein, Anna Pavlova, Tamara Karsavina, Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Alexis Bulgakov.

One of the most popular early productions of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, the ballet *Cléopâtre* was enhanced by the appearance of Rubinstein in the title role. She made her first entrance held aloft by Nubian slaves, to be revealed only gradually as screens hiding the sarcophagus on which she was carried were removed and the layers of multi-colored veils around her were taken away to display her half-naked body.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1910.

Original design for the "Serviteur du Temple" in the ballet *Cléopâtre*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1910." Inscribed "Cleopatre: Serviteur du temple."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,327.

Cléopâtre. Michel Fokine and Vera Fokina, wearing costumes designed by Bakst.

Porcelain figurine, modeled by Paul Scheurich, made by Volkstedt-Rudolstadt.

The Gift of Allison Delarue.

Cléopâtre. Michel Fokine and Vera Fokina, wearing costumes designed by Bakst.

Two postcard photographs.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

L'Oiseau de Feu, from Le Festin

Le Festin was a ballet composed of excerpts from ballets in the Russian repertory. *L'Oiseau de Feu* was the name Diaghilev gave the Bluebird pas de deux from *The Sleeping Beauty*, choreographed by Marius Petipa. *The Sleeping Beauty*, with music by Peter Ilitch Tchaikovsky, had its debut in St. Petersburg in 1890. Tamara Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinsky danced *L'Oiseau de Feu* in *Le Festin* at its premiere for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris at the Théâtre du Châtelet on May 18, 1909. Léon Bakst designed their costumes.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, ca. 1909.

Original design for L'Oiseau d'Or in the ballet *Le Festin*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst."

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Le Carnaval

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Robert Schumann, orchestrated by Alexander Glazunov,
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Anatole Liadov, Nicolas Tcherepnine.

Libretto: Michel Fokine and Léon Bakst.

Costumes: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Pavlov Hall, St. Petersburg, Dancers of the Imperial Ballet,
March 5 (February 20, old style), 1910. Diaghilev Ballets Russes,
Theater des Westens, Berlin, May 20, 1910 (with new costumes and
scenery by Bakst).

Principal dancers: St. Petersburg, Tamara Karsavina, Léonid Léontiev,

Vsevolod Meyerhold, Enrico Cechetti, Vera Fokina, Bronislava Nijinska. *Diaghilev Ballets Russes*: Lydia Lopokova, Vaslav Nijinsky.

A ballet about young love, cast in the characters of the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*. The ballet has been revived often, including a 1991 production by the Boston Ballet, staged by Nicholas Beriozoff, répétiteur of Fokine's ballets for six decades.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1910.

Original design for the ballet *Le Carnaval*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, pencil and ink wash on paper.

Signed "Bakst 10." Inscribed "valse noble."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,326.

Léon Bakst. Set design, ca. 1910.

Original design for the ballet *Le Carnaval*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and charcoal on paper.

Signed "Bakst."

The Pauline Billings Taylor Collection, the Gift of Carl Taylor. HTC 5,254.

Le Carnaval. Michel Fokine and Vera Fokina, wearing costumes designed by Bakst.

Postcard photograph.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Le Carnaval. Lydia Lopokova, wearing a costume designed by Bakst. New York, 1916.

Photograph by Ira L. Hill.

The Gift of Parmenia Migel Ekstrom.

Le Carnaval. Tamara Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinsky, in costumes by Bakst.

Porcelain figurine, made by Meissen.

The Marian Hannah Winter and Rose Winter Memorial Collection.

Schéhérazade

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

Libretto: Alexandre Benois (From the "Thousand and One Nights").

Scenery and Costume: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Théâtre National de l'Opéra, Paris,
June 4, 1910.

Principal dancers: Ida Rubinstein, Vaslav Nijinsky, Alexis Bulgakov,
Enrico Ceccetti, Sophie Fedorova.

Considered the epitome of Diaghilev's Orientalism, this one-act choreographic drama created an instant sensation for its brilliant palette of colors flaunted by Bakst, for its rampant sexuality, and for the eccentric and memorable characterizations by its star performers. The action takes place in a harem, featuring a famous orgy scene between the Shah's wives and his slaves. When the Shah discovers their infidelities he orders them slaughtered, allowing Nijinsky a death scene complete with a shoulder roll, his feet held high above his shuddering body. Even though Oriental themes had been popular since the nineteenth century, no one had combined ballet, evocative decors, and the imagination on stage in such an entrancing spectacle. Bakst and his collaborators found themselves famous.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1922.

Original design for the Blue Sultana (La Sultane Bleue) in the ballet
Schéhérazade, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1922."

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In some sources this design is identified as the Red Sultana.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1922.

Original design for a Eunuch in the ballet *Schéhérazade*, produced by
the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and silver paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1922."

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Léon Bakst. Drawing for the Blue Sultana in the ballet *Schéhérazade*.

Reproduced in *Bakst. The Story of Léon Bakst's Life*, by André Levinson. New York: Brentano, 1922.

Schéhérazade. Adolph Bolm, wearing a costume designed by Bakst. New York, 1916.

Photograph by E. O. Hoppe.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Schéhérazade. Michel Fokine and Vera Fokina, wearing costumes designed by Bakst.

Porcelain figurine, made by Volkstedt-Rudolstadt.

Signed "Goppel."

The Gift of Allison Delarue.

Ida Rubinstein

Ida Rubinstein (1885-1960) was born in Kharhov to a wealthy family. When her parents died, she was sent to live with her aunt in St. Petersburg, where she was introduced to the prominent artists of the city. Deciding on a theatrical career, although she did not have the requisite training, she made her debut in the title role of *Antigone* in St. Petersburg, and then studied acting with the Moscow actor A. K. Levisky and with Yuri Ozarovsky of the Aleksandrinsky Theatre. She engaged Michel Fokine of the Imperial Ballet to give her ballet lessons and to provide the choreography for her production of *Salomé*, in which she took the leading role. *Salomé*, with music by Alexander Glazunov and costumes by Léon Bakst, was performed privately in November 1908 at the Mikhailovsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, and then (as *Dance of Salomé*) on a mixed program on December 20 at the Petersburg Conservatory. Her *Salomé* (which created a scandal because Rubinstein as Salomé removed most of her veils) marked the first of Rubinstein's many collaborations with Bakst, who remained her friend and chief theatrical patron, other than Serge Diaghilev, until the designer's death.

Iris M. Fanger

(Excerpted from the *International Dictionary of Ballet*.

London: St. James Press, 1993.)

Jacques Emil Blanché. Portrait of Ida Rubinstein in the ballet
Schéhérazade, wearing a costume designed by Bakst.

Oil on canvas.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Schéhérazade. Ida Rubinstein, wearing a costume designed by Bakst, ca.
1910.

Photograph by Bert, Paris.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Narcisse

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Nicholas Tcherepnine.

Libretto: Léon Bakst.

Scenery and Costume: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Théâtre de Monte-Carlo, April 26,
1911.

Narcisse was another of the Bakst ballets dedicated to his idea of portraying classical Greece as a primitive society before its ruin by civilization. The story of the ballet, which was not a success, was based on the myth of Echo and Narcissus.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, ca. 1911.

Original design for Ephebus in the ballet *Narcisse*, produced by the
Ballets Russes.

Drawing, pencil and gouache on paper.

Inscribed "Narcisse: Beotnien: 9."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,222.

Léon Bakst. Complete drawing for Ephebus in the ballet *Narcisse*.

Reproduced in *L'Art Decoratif de Léon Bakst*, by Arsène Alexandre.
Paris: Maurice de Brunoff, 1913.

Le Dieu Bleu

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Reynaldo Hahn.

Libretto: Jean Cocteau and Federigo de Madrazo.

Scenery and Costumes: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, May 13, 1912.

Principal dancers: Max Frohman, Tamara Karsavina, Lydia Nelidova, Vaslav Nijinsky.

This one-act ballet, set in the outer court of a temple in India, is a complicated love story about a young woman in love with a man about to become a Hindu priest. She tries to claim him, but is bound by the priests, and left to the mercy of monsters who live in the temple. When she prays to the Lotus, a Goddess appears and then the Blue God who tames the monsters and saves her. The ballet was not a success; it was performed only three times in Paris and three times in London, and was never thereafter revived.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1911.

Original design for the Fiancée in the ballet *Le Dieu Bleu*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1911." Inscribed "Dieu Bleu 'La Fiancee' "

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,320.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1911.

Original design for "Baiaderes avec Paon" in the ballet *Le Dieu Bleu*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper mounted on cardboard.

Signed "Bakst 1911." Inscribed "3 Baiaderes avec Paon, 'Dieu Bleu'."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,194.

Le Dieu Bleu. Max Frohman and Tamara Karsavina, wearing costumes designed by Bakst.

Two postcard photographs.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Le Spectre de la Rose

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Carl Maria von Weber "Invitation to the Dance," orchestrated by Hector Berlioz.

Libretto: Jean-Louis Vaudoyer (after Théophile Gautier).

Scenery and Costumes: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Théâtre de Monte Carlo, April 11, 1911.

Principal dancers: Tamara Karsavina, Vaslav Nijinsky.

One of the most charming of the romantic ballets of the early era of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes about a young girl coming home after a ball. She carries a rose which comes to life when she falls asleep in her chair. Nijinsky found one of his greatest successes as the androgynous, sensual Spirit of the Rose, disappearing in an astonishing leap through the window at his exit. The ballet was continually revived during the twenty-year life of the company.

Léon Bakst. Properties design, ca. 1911.

Original design for the ballet *Le Spectre de la Rose*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper mounted on board.

Signed "Bakst." Inscribed "Accessories pour 'Le Spectre de la Rose.' 1 table de toilette avec objets de toilette 1 banquette. 1 Table ronde avec vase en verre et quantite de violette. 1 Divan avec 3 coussins. 1 Cadre, 2 cadres en or avec miniatures. 1 cage avec oiseau noir dedans; la cage l'attache au plafond devant la fenetre du gauche (du public)."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,249.

Le Spectre de la Rose. Vaslav Nijinsky, wearing a costume by designed by Bakst. Budapest, 1913.

Photograph by Rudolph Balogh, inscribed by Nijinsky to "Saki" (H. H. Munro), 1913.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Le Spectre de la Rose. Michel Fokine and Vera Fokina, wearing costumes designed by Bakst.

Postcard photograph.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

L'Après-Midi d'une Faune (The Afternoon of a Faun)

Choreography: Vaslav Nijinsky.

Music: Claude Debussy.

Libretto: Léon Bakst, after the poem by Stéphane Mallarmé.

Design: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, May 29, 1912.

Nijinsky's first assignment in choreography was an experiment in a new technique of movement which attempted to recreate the two-dimensional patterns of figures on an ancient Greek vase or in an Egyptian frieze painting. The plot is simple: a faun sees a group of nymphs bathing. He falls in love with the leading nymph, makes advances, and frightens her away. She leaves her scarf behind. Nijinsky's final gesture, lying on the scarf, caused an opening night scandal. The costumes were based on Bakst's images of antiquity, inspired by his trip to Greece in 1907.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1912.

Original design for a Nymph in the ballet *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1912." Inscribed "Après-Midi d'un Faune."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,313.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1912.

Original design for a Nymph in the ballet *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1912." Inscribed "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,315.

L'Après-Midi d'un Faune. Bust of Vaslav Nijinsky as the Faun, wearing a headdress designed by Bakst.

Bronze, sculpted by Una Troubridge, ca. 1913.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Daphnis et Chloë

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Maurice Ravel.

Libretto: Michel Fokine, after Longus.

Design: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, June 8, 1912, Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris.

Principal dancers: Tamara Karsavina, Vaslav Nijinsky, Adolph Bolm.

This work was first proposed by Fokine to the Imperial Ballet in 1904, but it was turned down; the submission included Fokine's early manifesto of his ideas for the reform of ballet. The ballet, a pastoral about a shepherd and his lover who are led from innocence to joyous knowledge by Pan, was finally staged for the Diaghilev company in 1912. Fokine had to compete with Nijinsky's first ballet, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, for rehearsal time and attention. *Daphnis et Chloë* was not a success, causing Fokine to leave the company and return to Russia.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, ca. 1912.

Original design for Villageoise in *Daphnis et Chloë*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper.

Signed "Bakst" (date has been erased). Inscribed " 'Daphnis et Chloë' costume de Villageoise."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,223.

Léon Bakst. Set design, ca. 1912.

Original design for the ballet *Daphnis et Chloë*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor on paper.

Signed "Bakst." Inscribed (on back) "Daphnis et Chloe, décor du 1er acte, par Leon Bakst."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,192.

Les Papillons (The Butterflies)

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Robert Schumann, orchestrated by Nicholas Tcherepnine.

Libretto: Michel Fokine.

Scenery: Mstislav Dobujinsky.

Costumes: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: First production: Maryinsky Theater, St. Petersburg, September 30, 1912. Premiere with Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Theatre de Monte-Carlo, April 16, 1914.

Principal dancers: Tamara Karsavina, Ludmilla Schollar, Michel Fokine.

A sequel to the earlier dream-like ballets such as *Les Sylphides* and *Le Carnaval*, with Victorian style costumes by Bakst. Pierrot (Fokine, in the only male role) is pursuing evasive female butterflies in a moonlit garden.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1912.

Original design for the ballet *Les Papillons*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1912." Inscribed "Papillons."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,321.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1912.

Original design for the ballet *Les Papillons*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1912." Inscribed " 'Papillons': (Mme Kschessinska)."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,323.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1912.

Original design for the ballet *Les Papillons*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, gouache and pencil on paper mounted on board.

Signed "Bakst."

The Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation Collection. HTC 4,714.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1912.

Original design for the ballet *Les Papillons*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, gouache and pencil on paper.

The Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation Collection. HTC 4,708.

La Légende de Joseph

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Richard Strauss.

Libretto: Count Harry Kessler and Hugo von Hoffmannsthal.

Costumes: Léon Bakst.

Scenery: Jose-Maria Sert.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Théâtre National de l'Opéra, Paris,
May 14, 1914.

Principal dancers: Maria Kusnetzova, Léonide Massine, Vera Fokina,
Alexis Bulgakov, Serge Grigoriev.

The ballet, based on the Biblical story, was set in sixteenth-century Venice, with costumes by Bakst to match, except for Joseph and the slave dealers who were in Oriental dress. The eighteen-year-old Massine made his debut appearance with the Diaghilev Ballets Russes in this work.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1914.

Original design for Potiphar's Wife in the ballet *La Légende de Joseph*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and silver paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,328.

L'Oiseau de Feu (The Firebird)

Choreography: Michel Fokine.

Music: Igor Stravinsky.

Libretto: Michel Fokine.

Costumes: Alexander Golovine and Léon Bakst.

Scenery: Golovine.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Théâtre National de l'Opéra, Paris,
June 25, 1910.

Principal dancers: Tamara Karsavina, Vera Fokina, Michel Fokine,
Alexis Bulgakov.

The theme of the ballet that began Stravinsky's long association with dance is based on several Russian fairy tales, another consistent motif in the early seasons of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. The ballet was revived with new scenery and costumes in 1926 by Natalia Gontcharova.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1915.

Original design for the ballet *L'Oiseau de Feu*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper mounted on cardboard.

Signed "Bakst 1915."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

HTC 4,221.

Les Femmes de bonne Humeur (The Good-Natured Women)

Choreography: Léonide Massine.

Music: Domenico Scarletti, arranged and orchestrated by Vincenzo
Tommasini.

Libretto: Tommasini, after "Le Donne di Buon Umor" by Carlo
Goldoni.

Scenery and Costume: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Teatro Costanzi, Rome, April 12, 1917.

Principal dancers: Lydia Lopokova, Lubov Tchernicheva, Massine, Enrico Cecchetti.

Massine was only twenty-one years old when he translated the Goldoni play into a dramatic ballet, with wonderfully realized characters based on the *Commedia dell'arte* tradition.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, ca. 1917.

Original design for the Marquis Luca in the ballet *Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and silver and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 17." Inscribed " 'Le Donne di Bon Umoro': 'Luca': Marquis."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,329.

Aladin; ou la Lampe Merveilleuse (Aladdin and the Magic Lamp)

Author: "Rip" (George Thenon).

Composer: Willy Redstone.

Director: M. Signoret.

Design: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: May 22, 1919, Théâtre Marigny, Paris.

Principal Performers: Albert Brasseur, M. Clermont, M. Signoret, Yvonne Reynolds, and The Tiller Girls.

Alexander Schouvaloff describes *Aladin; ou la Lampe Merveilleuse* as "a modern fairy story performed as a revue." This Aladin is a Parisian banker who became rich because of a lamp he inherited. He commands a Bolshevik character to ruin a rich factory owner by organizing a strike of his workers, so Aladin can marry his daughter. Although no one had hired Bakst before to design a revue, the assignment came at the right time. The upheavals from World War I, the Russian Revolution, and Diaghilev's turn toward modernist artists had left Bakst free to take on new projects.

Léon Bakst. Set design.

Original design for the revue *Aladin; ou La Lampe Merveilleuse*.

Drawing, pencil on paper, in a sketchbook.

The Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation Collection. HTC 4,750.

La Belle au Bois Dormant (The Sleeping Princess)

Choreography: Marius Petipa, reproduced by Nicholas Sergeyev, with additions by Bronislava Nijinska.

Music: Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, with some orchestrations by Igor Stravinsky.

Libretto: After the fairy story by Charles Perrault.

Costumes and Scenery: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Maryinsky Theater, St. Petersburg, Dancers of the Imperial Ballet, January 3, 1890. Premiere with Diaghilev Ballets Russes, Alhambra Theatre, London, November 2, 1921.

Principal dancers: Jean Javinsky, Olga Spessiva (Spessivtseva), Lydia Lopokova, Stanislas Idzikowski, Carlotta Brianza, Pierre Vladimirov, Nijinska.

In 1921, Diaghilev desperately needed a hit in order to replenish his budget. He mounted *The Sleeping Princess*, as he renamed the ballet, in the hope of a long-run spectacle. He hired Sergeyev, the former ballet master of the Imperial Ballet, who had left Russia with the famed notebooks (now in the Harvard Theatre Collection) which contained notes on the Petipa Ballets, and added Nijinska, who had just come back to the West from Kiev to re-choreograph some of the scenes.

In 1916, Anna Pavlova had produced a fifty-minute version of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Hippodrome Theatre in New York, with scenery and costumes by Bakst. In a two-month period in 1921, Bakst designed more than two hundred costumes, accessories, and props for Diaghilev's production, reusing some of his earlier designs from the Pavlova production.

The Sleeping Princess was a departure for Diaghilev, who was by now well known for his modernist ballets of the World War I period. Although now a

landmark in the history of ballet in the west, with a run of 114 performances, its expenses were so high that Diaghilev lost the elaborate sets and costumes as security for the loan. *The Sleeping Princess* was Bakst's final ballet for Diaghilev.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1920.

Original design identified as the Good Fairy in the ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, produced at the Alhambra Theatre, London.

Drawing, pencil, watercolor, and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1920."

The Gift of the Hylas Charitable Foundation, 1984.

HTC 5,259.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1921.

Original design for Galison, the Prince's Tutor for the ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, produced at the Alhambra Theatre, London.

Drawing, pencil and watercolor, with gold and silver paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1921."

The Gift of the Hylas Charitable Foundation, 1984.

HTC 5,257.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1921.

Original design for Princesse Aurore in the ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper mounted on board.

Signed "Bakst 1921."

Inscribed "Princesse Aurore 3 Acte."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1921.

Original design for Princess Aurore in *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1921." Inscribed "Princesse Aurore 5 acte.: Des miniscules diamants seront parsemes sur la robe. Sleeping Princess des gouttes d'eau."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,325.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1921.

Original design for a Marchioness in the ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, produced at the Alhambra Theatre, London.

Drawing, pencil, watercolor, and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1921."

The Gift of the Hylas Charitable Foundation, 1984.

HTC 5,258.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1921.

Original design for Marshall Catalabutte in the ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, produced at the Alhambra Theatre, London.

Drawing, pencil and watercolor on paper mounted on board.

Signed "L Bakst 1921." Inscribed "To Mr. Willy Clarkson."

Purchased on the Frank E. Chase Fund, 1945. HTC 5,904.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1921.

Original design for a Chinese Lady in the ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, produced by the Ballets Russes.

Drawing, watercolor, pencil, and gold paint on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1921."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,314.

Léon Bakst. Drawing for the Chinese Lady in the ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*.

Reproduced in *The Designs of Léon Bakst for The Sleeping Princess. A Ballet in Five Acts after Perrault. Music by Tchaikovsky*, by Léon Bakst, with a preface by André Levinson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923.

La Belle au Bois Dormant. Maria Dalbaicin in the Danse Arabe, wearing a costume designed by Bakst.

Photograph by E. O. Hoppe.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

La Belle au Bois Dormant. Bronislava Nijinska as a Fairy, wearing a costume designed by Bakst.

Photograph.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

In the caricature by Edmund Dulac, below, Bakst is drawn wearing this same costume.

Istar

Choreography: Leo Staats.

Music: Vincent d'Indy.

Design: Léon Bakst.

Premiere: Staged by Ida Rubinstein at the Théâtre National de l'Opéra, Paris, July 10, 1924.

Principal dancer: Ida Rubinstein.

In the style of Persian miniatures, this was Bakst's last work before his death in Paris on December 27, 1924.

Léon Bakst. Set design, 1922.

Original design for the ballet *Istar*.

Drawing, watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1922." Inscribed (on mat board) "Leon Bakst, l'Adoration Terebenine."

The Edwin Binney 3rd Collection. HTC 5,613.

La Péri

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1911.

Costume for Natalia Trouhanova in the unproduced ballet *La Péri*.

Color pochoir over black lithograph.

Signed (in the stone) "Bakst 1911."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Salomé

Salomé. Tamara Karsavina as Salomé, wearing a costume designed by Bakst.

Photograph by E. O. Hoppe.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Salomé. Tamara Karsavina, wearing a costume designed by Bakst.

Porcelain figurine, made by Volkstedt-Rudolstadt.

The Gift of Allison Delarue.

Bacchanale

Bacchanale. Anna Pavlova and Laurent Novikoff, wearing costumes designed by Bakst.

Photograph by Becker and Maass, signed by Pavlova.

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection.

Bacchanale. Anna Pavlova, wearing a costume designed by Bakst.

Bronze figurine by Seraphin Soudbinine, ca. 1920.

The George Chaffee Collection.

Costume for the Marchesa Casati

The Marchesa Luisa Casati was one of the principal beauties of her era. Daughter of a Milanese industrialist, she married into the Venetian nobility and lived near the Grand Canal in a home that later became the home and museum of Peggy Guggenheim. The Marchesa gave immense, exotic parties where she wore the various costumes created for her by Bakst.

Léon Bakst. Costume design, 1913.

Original design for a ball costume of a pirate, for the Marchesa Casati.

Drawing, pencil and watercolor on paper.

Signed "Bakst 1913." Inscribed "Costume pour la Marquise Casati."

The Gift of Mr. Frederick R. Koch, 1983. HTC 5,256.

Likenesses of Bakst

Edmund Dulac. Caricature of Serge Diaghilev and Léon Bakst.

Drawing, ink and watercolor on mat board.

Signed "Edmund Dulac." Inscribed "Towards Beauty. The fairy-tale of 'The Sleeping Princess.' Mr. Bakst as the good fairy leading the Prince Charming Mr. Diaghileff towards the castle of the Sleeping Beauty."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,240.

Jean Cocteau. Caricature of Léon Bakst.

Drawing, ink on paper.

Signed "Cocteau."

Inscribed "Albergo Minerva. Paques 1917."

The Howard D. Rothschild Collection. HTC 4,227.

Pablo Picasso. Portrait drawing of Léon Bakst.

Reproduced in *The Designs of Léon Bakst for The Sleeping Princess. A Ballet in Five Acts after Perrault. Music by Tchaikovsky*, by Léon Bakst, with a preface by André Levinson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923.

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The Art of Léon Bakst

For the Ballets Russes of Serge Diaghilev

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The Exhibition

This exhibition was organized and mounted by Fredric Woodbridge Wilson and Iris Fanger, with the assistance of Thomas Garrett and members of the Harvard Theatre Collection staff.

The material in the exhibition was drawn entirely from the Harvard Theatre Collection. Inquiries concerning access to the Collection should be addressed to Fredric Woodbridge Wilson, Curator.

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The Harvard Theatre Collection

Fredric Woodbridge Wilson, Curator

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